

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a studless tire having a tread comprising a rubber sheet having a thickness of at most 20 mm, which comprises:

extruding a rubber composition containing 2 to 50 parts by weight of plate material or short fiber having an average fiber diameter of 1 to 100 μm and an average length of 0.1 to 5 mm based on 100 parts by weight of diene rubber in a tube shape, thereby orienting said short fiber in the circumferential direction of said tube shaped rubber composition;

cutting said tube shaped rubber composition at one point in a sidewall thereof in the extrusion direction to obtain a rubber sheet having a complex elastic modulus E_a in the extrusion direction and complex elastic modulus E_b in the 90° direction from the extrusion direction measured at 25°C which fulfill the following equation:

$$1.1 \leq E_b/E_a;$$

cutting said rubber sheet parallel to the extrusion direction to obtain pieces; and

rotating each piece 90° and laminating the rotated pieces together.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a studless tire having a tread, which comprises the steps of:

extruding a rubber composition for a tread containing short fiber or plate~~[[like]]~~ material of a Moh's hardness of 3 to 7 into a tube,

forming a sheet by cutting one point in the sidewall of said tube in the extrusion direction,

cutting said sheet parallel to the extrusion direction to obtain pieces, and

rotating each piece of said rubber sheet 90° and laminating the rotated pieces together to form the tread,

wherein said tread has a complex elastic modulus E_1 in the tread thickness direction when measured at 25°, and said sheet has a complex elastic modulus E_α in the extrusion direction and a complex elastic modulus E_β in a 90° direction from the extrusion direction, such that if said rubber composition is made into 2 mm sheets with a roller, said moduli fulfill the following equation,

$$60 \leq (E_1 - E_\beta) / (E_\alpha - E_\beta) \times 100 \leq 100$$

and the tread has a tread rubber hardness measured at -10°C of 45 to 70 degrees.

5. (Currently Amended) A studless tire obtained by the process of Claim 1.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) A studless tire obtained by the process of Claim 4.

9. (Currently Amended) A studless tire having a tread ~~formed by the process of claim 4~~ comprising diene rubber and short fiber or plate~~[[like]]~~ material of a Moh's hardness of 3 to 7 dispersed in said diene rubber so as to be oriented in the tread thickness direction,

wherein said tread has a complex elastic modulus E_1 in the tread thickness direction when measured at 25°C, and said sheet has a complex elastic modulus E_α in ~~[[the]]~~ an extrusion direction and a complex elastic modulus E_β in a 90° direction from the extrusion direction, such that if said rubber composition is made into 2 mm sheets with a roller, said moduli fulfill the following equation,

$$60 \leq (E_1 - E_\beta) / (E_\alpha - E_\beta) \times 100 \leq 100$$

and the tread has a tread rubber hardness measured at -10°C of 45 to 70 degrees

wherein said sheet is cut perpendicularly in the extrusion direction to obtain pieces, and each piece of said sheet is rotated 90° and the rotated pieces are laminated

together to form the tread.

10. (Currently Amended) The studless tire of Claim 9, wherein said short fiber or plate[[-like]] material is short fiber having an average fiber diameter of 1 to 100 μm and average length of 0.1 to 5 mm or plate[[-like]] material having an average thickness of 1 to 90 μm and average length of 0.1 to 5 mm.